IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS GROUP

ISG Case Study: The University of Mississippi

Overview

Customer The University of Mississippi

Challenge The housing department needed a more streamlined process to manage access rights in residence halls

Solution By implementing TotalCard they were able to more easily control access rights and privileges for students

Result The University now has a flexible, fully-integrated student information and door access control system with expandable features for future growth



Identifying the Need

For students, a college dormitory is a home away from home. For university housing departments, a residence hall or a collection of residence halls can be a management challenge equal to a small town. With thousands of students to serve each year, colleges are constantly scratching their heads as they look for ways to better manage these communities, including how to increase security while improving efficiency.

The University of Mississippi (also known as Ole Miss), like most universities, has regularly evaluated products and services that can help better serve students even as the total student population grows. With over 20,000 students, 40% of whom live in on-campus housing, the members of the Housing IT Department have their work cut out for them. That's why in 2009 they invested in an electronic access control and visitor registration system from TotalCard to manage access rights and privileges at all 14 residence halls and two apartment complexes.

Offering the Solution

TotalCard is a powerful campus card system that allows colleges and universities to easily identify, validate and track students and faculty members. Students can use their ID cards for a variety of things both on and off campus including purchases, utilizing meal plans, attending events, accessing dorm rooms and other campus facilities, tracking attendance in class, and more.

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TotalCard is designed to work within each university to provide user-friendly account management, reporting and system administration. The system's modular design allows campuses to implement features and applications one at a time, in phases or all at once, depending on specific campus needs. The system can easily expand as your campus needs grow in the future.

Prior to implementing TotalCard, Ole Miss students gained access to their residence hall and room with a physical key. The biggest security risk to this method occurred as students lost their keys, because there is no way to "deactivate" a lost or stolen key. By migrating to credentials for access, cards can be immediately deactivated in the system as soon as they are lost or stolen, helping to minimize the risk of unapproved access. Furthermore, the process of granting access is far simpler with an electronic system.

When considering options for access control, the campus was very concerned with cost and ease of installation. By implementing wireless locks, they were able to minimize installation and wiring costs, while still providing electronic access to each individual room in every residence hall. To further simplify things, each wireless lock is battery powered and system administrators receive notifications as batteries need to be changed, ensuring locks are online and active at all times.

Once a system is chosen and locks are installed, a campus must consider how credentials will be issued and activated. At Ole Miss, ID cards are mailed to each student's home address during the summer. This solved the issue of long lines at the campus card office on move in day, but with no way of accounting for students as they moved in, it created a problem of inaccurate records.

The housing department approached TotalCard for help building a solution to ensure each student "Checked in" while moving in before accessing their room. TotalCard facilitated an integration between the access control system and StarRez, the campus housing management system, allowing room numbers and access privileges to be instantly assigned to students once they've presented their credential and checked in at the front desk of their residence halls. StarRez is a comprehensive student housing solution that includes online housing applications, online roommate and room self-selection, as well as complete integration with other campus systems like TotalCard.

Providing the Results

"We manage all of our student room assignments in StarRez, so we knew an integration between the two systems would help to simplify the move in process," explains Chris Thornton, Systems Administrator for Student Housing. "To check in, students present their prox cards to a reader at the front desk of their residence hall, at which time their room assignment and access privileges are activated instantly in TotalCard. This is great for us because students get fast and easy access to their rooms and we get an electronic list of who has moved in already and who has not."

The campus also benefits from use of TotalCard's electronic visitor registration system at each residence hall. Students are asked to meet their guest in the lobby of their building, at which time both the student and guest present an ID and a record of the visit is logged. The system accepts both Student ID cards and Driver's Licenses for fast enrollment and electronic reporting, giving operators easy access to information about who

is coming and going in each building.

The combination of electronic door access and visitor registration adds extra security to residence halls of any size. By implementing a fully integrated one card system like TotalCard, a housing department benefits from the features and functionality of multiple applications without the headache of managing each system individually.

About the ISG

The Identification Systems Group (ISG) is a nationwide network of local identification card system integrators, providing high quality, cost-effective solutions backed by the local support and strength of its Professional Services Certification program. Each company works together to provide seamless nationwide support in the USA and Canada.

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